

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Background of Study

School X, the place I did my teaching practicum is a Private Christian School of particular denomination. The vision of the school is to be a well-known Christian school that develops students' potential optimally and be able to compete in global civilization. This vision is implemented in the mission to provide a qualified education based on Christian values. It is a school that built under a foundation below a Church; where everything that goes in the school have to be known by the church's administrators. Most of the staff and students are the member of that church.

This private school is a school for middle-to-high income families, for most of the students are coming from above average families or from higher-economics school. The school fees varies, with special amount for them who member of the school's church, they pay less than others.

In this school, parents speak more than students. The hierarchy put parents and students above teachers. It means parents are more important than teachers.

School X begins tracking students since their eighth grade. They separate students into some classes and label them as 8-1, 8-2, and 8-3. This separation continues to high school when the separation is based on the Science and Social

classes. Students are divided based on their academic performance in previous grade and their result in enrollment test.

School had never been easy for me, even though I enjoy it so much. There are many things in school that formed me nowadays. Here is one example: I was taught to think that ranking of scores is very important; students are competing to get more attention from teacher and parents. Because of that, it was normal when my school separated students according to their rank. And when I entered grade 8, I was very frustrated when I had to enter the “A” class, because of the competition atmosphere and the high expectations.

I did not like to be in that class, I hated it. Everyone are very selfish, they tend to reject group assignments and alienate students whose brain not too “shiny”, and if they have to do group work, they will do it with their way, perfectly, so that they will get the best mark in class. I was in the top 5 rank of all my subjects at 7th grade, but after I entered that 8th grade, I was very satisfied with below 5 because it will be safer. Those students up there are monsters. I do not want to be one of them.

As I said before, my last teaching practice was in a school that does tracking, just like my junior school did to me. It is pretty hard for me because I used to think that being in the A-group is the best thing, but then I have to change my mind because the lessons I had at Teachers College taught me that it means we are labeling students by their abilities, and we did not appreciate every talents in each students. Equality is the thing that I have to keep in mind and apply in my teaching. Every student is uniquely made by God, so they have to be treated equally.

School X, the school I went for 5 months teaching practice, has two classes for grade 10; let us call it class 10-1 and class 10-2. Students are divided into those group of classes based on their performance in the application test they had before entering school as high school students. So they have tests for Mathematics, English, and Bahasa Indonesia, and the results will give the school some clues to decide which one is the “right” group for them. Sometimes they labeled the class as higher class and ordinary class. For further information, class 10-2’s member is about one-third more than class 10-1’s.

It is quite popular in that school that if they are one of the class 10-1’s students, it means that they are smarter than anyone in class 10-2. All teachers also agreed that class 10-1’s students are bright, while class 10-2’s are a group of misbehaved students. I often heard teachers murmuring while walking to teach in class 10-2, because they know – or hope, because they are very sure about their thought – that there will be chaos inside that class. It’s like I can read their mind “Oh, I’m very tired. And I have to yell in this class for they won’t listen if I don’t. And after all my wasted energy, there will be some misbehaved students who are off task and try to destroy my lesson. I just hope to finish it quickly.” (this is based on conversation with the teachers)

Those teachers should be helpful to students. From their behavior, it seems like they are ignoring students’ talents and uniqueness. They are God’s children and made in His image. They have their own strengths that need to be discovered. Teacher should help students to find their best way of learning. “Though they are helpless, children posses an innate, God-given capacity to learn” (Issler and Habermas, 2002, p. 74).

1.2. The Statement of Problems

1. What is the effect of tracking and what do people, especially in schools, say about that?
2. How tracking affects underachievers?
3. How we –as teachers- apply equity for all students and help underachievers in a tracking school?

1.3. The Purpose of Study

1. Find the definition of tracking and what people say about that.
2. Identify the implications of tracking for underachiever students.
3. Make a suggestion to apply equity for all students and help underachievers in a tracking school.

1.4. The Benefits of Study

For teachers, this Skripsi may give a glimpse about school tracking. As well it will hope to find the right place to stand as a Christian teacher that has to guide students in a loving, caring way and equally, because they all are unique.

For readers, this Skripsi may give some information about school tracking that happens in most schools, in different ways and for different reasons. These are some facts and a Christian perspective about it, I hope it will help to give more attention to education nowadays and understand that each student is different from others; they need to be treated according to their needs and strengths.

1.5. The Explanation of Terms

School tracking happens when a school separates students into several groups based on their academic achievement, usually based on their previous school report or for some schools it is based on their performance in particular lessons or entrance test. It's like Van Brummelen said in his book "Most recent evidence suggest that such tracking does not benefit high school students." (1998, p. 80).

Oakes (1986) said that "tracking is the practice of dividing students into separate classes for high-, average-, and low-achievers; ...," but this definition is used interchangeably with ability-grouping.

My focus in this Skripsi is tracking that grouping students into some classes for all subjects at Senior High School. The tracking is based on the result of admission test. (in some cases this can be called streaming.)

Underachievers are those who experience underachievement, which means "a discrepancy between ability and performance that persists over time" (Rathvon, 1996, p. 22). It means that their real ability could make them reach better result or better performance, but they just keep achieving below standard. In this Skripsi, I will refer underachievers as students who are in the lower-track of a tracking school. Sometimes I will use the term lower-level students.